

66/06/99

jc584 U.S. PTO

PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL LETTER
(Small Entity)Docket No.
01-0941-556TO THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS

Transmitted herewith for filing under 35 U.S.C. 111 and 37 C.F.R. 1.53 is the patent application of:

ROBERT J. BELETSKYFor: **IMPROVED BUCKLES WITH OVERRIDING LOCK**

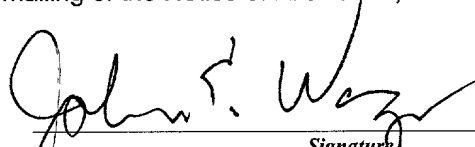
Enclosed are:

- ☒ Certificate of Mailing with Express Mail Mailing Label No. **EL 436501248US**
- ☒ **11** sheets of drawings.
- ☐ A certified copy of a _____ application.
- ☒ Declaration ☒ Signed. ☐ Unsigned.
- ☒ Power of Attorney
- ☐ Information Disclosure Statement
- ☐ Preliminary Amendment
- ☒ **2** Verified Statement(s) to Establish Small Entity Status Under 37 C.F.R. 1.9 and 1.27.
- ☐ Other:

jc584 U.S. PTO
09/370388
06/06/99**CLAIMS AS FILED**

For	#Filed	#Allowed	#Extra	Rate	Fee
Total Claims	18	- 20 =	0	x \$9.00	\$0.00
Indep. Claims	3	- 3 =	0	x \$39.00	\$0.00
Multiple Dependent Claims (check if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/>					\$0.00
BASIC FEE					\$380.00
TOTAL FILING FEE					\$380.00

- ☒ A check in the amount of **\$380.00** to cover the filing fee is enclosed.
- ☒ The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge and credit Deposit Account No. **23-0083** as described below. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.
- ☐ Charge the amount of _____ as filing fee.
- ☒ Credit any overpayment.
- ☐ Charge any additional filing fees required under 37 C.F.R. 1.16 and 1.17.
- ☐ Charge the issue fee set in 37 C.F.R. 1.18 at the mailing of the Notice of Allowance, pursuant to 37 C.F.R. 1.311(b).

Dated: **August 5, 1999**

Signature

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CC:

**VERIFIED STATEMENT (DECLARATION) CLAIMING SMALL ENTITY
STATUS (37 CFR 1.9(f) AND 1.27 (b)) - INDEPENDENT INVENTOR**

Docket No.
01-0941-556

Serial No.

Filing Date

Patent No.

Issue Date

Applicant/ **Robert Beletsky**
Patentee:

Invention: **IMPROVED BUCKLES WITH OVERRIDING LOCK**

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that I qualify as an independent inventor as defined in 37 CFR 1.9(c) for purposes of paying reduced fees under section 41(a) and (b) of Title 35, United States Code, to the Patent and Trademark Office with regard to the invention entitled above and described in:

- ☒ the specification to be filed herewith.
☐ the application identified above.
☐ the patent identified above.

I have not assigned, granted, conveyed or licensed and am under no obligation under contract or law to assign, grant, convey or license, any rights in the invention to any person who could not be classified as an independent inventor under 37 CFR 1.9(c) if that person had made the invention, or to any concern which would not qualify as a small business concern under 37 CFR 1.9(d) or a nonprofit organization under 37 CFR 1.9(e).

Each person, concern or organization to which I have assigned, granted, conveyed, or licensed or am under an obligation under contract or law to assign, grant, convey, or license any rights in the invention is listed below:

- ☐ No such person, concern or organization exists.
☒ Each such person, concern or organization is listed below.

*NOTE: Separate verified statements are required from each named person, concern or organization having rights to the invention averring to their status as small entities (37 CFR 1.27)

FULL NAME **BIANCHI INTERNATIONAL**

ADDRESS **100 Calle Cortez, Temecula, CA 92590**
☐

Individual

☐

Small Business Concern

☐

Nonprofit Organization

FULL NAME

ADDRESS

☐

Individual

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Small Business Concern

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Nonprofit Organization

FULL NAME

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Individual

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Small Business Concern

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Nonprofit Organization

FULL NAME

ADDRESS

☐

Individual

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Small Business Concern

☐

Nonprofit Organization

I acknowledge the duty to file, in this application or patent, notification of any change in status resulting in loss of entitlement to small entity status prior to paying, or at the time of paying, the earliest of the issue fee or any maintenance fee due after the date on which status as a small entity is no longer appropriate. (37 CFR 1.28(b))

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code, and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application, any patent issuing thereon, or any patent to which this verified statement is directed.

NAME OF INVENTOR Robert Beletsky

SIGNATURE OF INVENTOR 

DATE: 8/4/99

NAME OF INVENTOR _____

SIGNATURE OF INVENTOR _____

DATE: _____

NAME OF INVENTOR _____

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SIGNATURE OF INVENTOR _____

DATE: _____

**VERIFIED STATEMENT (DECLARATION) CLAIMING SMALL ENTITY
STATUS (37 CFR 1.9(f) AND 1.27 (c)) - SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN**

Docket No.
01-0941-556

Serial No.

Filing Date

Patent No.

Issue Date

Applicant/ **Robert Beletsky**
Patentee:

Invention: **IMPROVED BUCKLES WITH OVERRIDING LOCK**

I hereby declare that I am:

- ☐ the owner of the small business concern identified below:
☒ an official of the small business concern empowered to act on behalf of the concern identified below:

NAME OF CONCERN: **BIANCHI INTERNATIONAL**

ADDRESS OF CONCERN: **100 Calle Cortez, Temecula, CA 92590**

I hereby declare that the above-identified small business concern qualifies as a small business concern as defined in 37 CFR 121.3-18, and reproduced in 37 CFR 1.9(d), for purposes of paying reduced fees under Section 41(a) and (b) of Title 35, United States Code, in that the number of employees of the concern, including those of its affiliates, does not exceed 500 persons. For purposes of this statement, (1) the number of employees of the business concern is the average over the previous fiscal year of the concern of the persons employed on a full-time, part-time or temporary basis during each of the pay periods of the fiscal year, and (2) concerns are affiliates of each other when either, directly or indirectly, one concern controls or has the power to control the other, or a third party or parties controls or has the power to control both.

I hereby declare that rights under contract or law have been conveyed to and remain with the small business concern identified above with regard to the above identified invention described in:

- ☒ the specification filed herewith with title as listed above.
☐ the application identified above.
☐ the patent identified above.

If the rights held by the above-identified small business concern are not exclusive, each individual, concern or organization having rights to the invention is listed on the next page and no rights to the invention are held by any person, other than the inventor, who could not qualify as an independent inventor under 37 CFR 1.9(c) or by any concern which would not qualify as a small business concern under 37 CFR 1.9(d) or a nonprofit organization under 37 CFR 1.9(e).

Each person, concern or organization to which I have assigned, granted, conveyed, or licensed or am under an obligation under contract or law to assign, grant, convey, or license any rights in the invention is listed below:

- ☐ no such person, concern or organization exists.
☐ each such person, concern or organization is listed below.

FULL NAME

ADDRESS

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Individual

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Small Business Concern

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Nonprofit Organization

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Small Business Concern

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Nonprofit Organization

Separate verified statements are required from each named person, concern or organization having rights to the invention averring to their status as small entities. (37 CFR 1.27)

I acknowledge the duty to file, in this application or patent, notification of any change in status resulting in loss of entitlement to small entity status prior to paying, or at the time of paying, the earliest of the issue fee or any maintenance fee due after the date on which status as a small entity is no longer appropriate. (37 CFR 1.28(b))

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code, and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application, any patent issuing thereon, or any patent to which this verified statement is directed.

NAME OF PERSON SIGNING:

Gary French

TITLE OF PERSON SIGNING

OTHER THAN OWNER:

President

ADDRESS OF PERSON SIGNING:

BIANCHI INTERNATIONAL100 Calle CortezTemecula, CA 92590

SIGNATURE:



DATE:

8/4/99

APPLICATION

FOR

UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

OF

ROBERT BELETSKY

FOR

IMPROVED BUCKLES WITH OVERRIDING LOCK

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In recent years there has been a tremendous advance in the development of effective plastic buckles for use on belts and in joining straps for backpacks and other applications. The buckles are generally rectangular in shape with a belt or strap loop attachment by at each end. One part is identified as the receptor or female part and the other the male or engaging part, and the loop attachments are cross bars on the outer ends of each of the male or female part. The two parts interlock and typically the receiving part has an attractive front surface which may be ornamented in many respects or left plain.

In these buckles, the engaging part normally includes a pair of locking prongs at the top and bottom and a tongue or tang in the center to guide the mating of the two parts when buckling the device. The tongue or tang is inserted into the receptor part and the prongs are flexible and have integral catches which extend upward and downward in relationship to the face of the buckle. The buckle receiver typically has openings top and bottom where the prongs may be contacted and with the first finger and thumb to be squeezed together simultaneously to release the top and bottom catch allowing the buckle to slide open. Often guide rails are contained within the receiver body and similar rails or grooves are present on the tang to ensure that the two parts engage in a smooth straight sliding movement. This class of buckle is the subject of the John Bianchi Patent No. 4,991,272 assigned to the assignee of this application and U.S. Patent 5,222,279 as well as U.S. Design Patent D341,105.

The combination of the two prongs with catches and guiderails gives a degree of protection from the buckle becoming only partly engaged and inadvertently released.

Others have thought to add some further protection from unintended release such as a button which must be released in addition to the intended release of the two prong catches. Such a secondary button has appeared on the front face of the receiver and acts as a third catch. Such a latch is illustrated by U.S. Patent 5,774,956. In that system, the button must be actuated simultaneously with the two edge prongs.

Simultaneous operation does not appear to be desirable and instead it would appear that the actuating button acts as an overriding lock of the top and bottom prongs preventing their release through mechanical interaction between the front button and each of the top and bottom prongs.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Faced with this state of the art, it appeared that an independent button controlled lock might add additional degree of security but in actuality it is a modest addition to the buckle. It has been very clear that one can unintentionally release one of the prong catches merely by a downward pressure on the top prong catch or by an upward pressure on the bottom prong catch. Since these are often not readily visible, it is possible for one of the catches to be released and then the second one released and then the total integrity of the buckle rests solely on any button and its third catch. For the most effective buckle, one does not want three independent catches, any one of which can be released independent of the others.

From the foregoing, it was determined that the most effective use of the third button is one that does not have a catch but blocks release of either top or bottom prong until it is actuated. It automatically releases both the top and bottom prongs so that neither the top nor the bottom prong catches can be disengaged without first releasing the third catch. In such a case the thumb and index finger are used to release of the top and bottom prong catches as in the past another finger is used to operate the button and allow the top and bottom prongs to move. This allows both the top and bottom prong catches to be released by thumb and finger pressure. Therefore, the three interconnected release devices are effective to maintain the buckle engagement at all times when engagement is intended.

Described herein are several embodiments of this invention namely:

1) a resiliently mounted front button version which is depressed inwardly to allow flexing movement of the top and bottom prongs for their release;

2) a sliding front catch optionally protected by side ribs and likewise must be first operated to allow inward flexing of the top and bottom prongs;

3) a rotating front latch similarly protected and similarly operative; and

4) a front button embodiment where the front button is formed integrally in the female buckle part and thereby always protected within the buckle body.

These various embodiments each have preferred applications.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING(S)

This invention may be more clearly understood with the following detailed description and by reference to the drawings in which:

Fig. 1 is a front elevational view of a buckle of this invention;

Fig. 2 is a transverse sectional view of the buckle of Fig. 1 taken along line A-A of Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a front elevational view of a slightly modified form of the buckle of Fig. 1 with the prongs shown in dashed lines to indicate the prong positions during the step of opening the buckle;

Fig. 4 is a transverse sectional view similar to Fig. 2 with the buckle in the act of being released;

Fig. 5 is a front elevational view of the male buckle member of the embodiment of Fig. 1;

Fig. 6 is a longitudinal sectional view of the male member of Fig. 5 taken along line 6-6 of Fig. 5;

Fig. 7 is a front elevational view of the female part of a first alternate embodiment of this invention;

Fig. 8 is a longitudinal sectional view taken along line 8-8 of Fig. 7;

Fig. 9 is in exploded perspective view of the lockout assembly of this first alternate embodiment;

Fig. 10 is a front elevational view of the buckle of a first alternate embodiment shown with a portion of a belt shown secured to the male member of the buckle;

Fig. 11 is a longitudinal sectional view of this first alternate embodiment taken along lines 11-11 of Fig. 10 showing the lockout assemblies both in place in the buckle and a similar assembly shown above the buckle;

Fig. 12 is a front elevational view of the lockout assembly of Figs. 10 and 11;

Fig. 13 is a longitudinal sectional view of the lockout assembly of Fig. 12 taken along lines 13 - 13 of Fig. 12;

Fig. 14 is a front elevational view of the lockout assembly of Fig. 12 oriented at 90 degree as compared with Fig. 12;

Fig. 15 is a side elevational view of the lockout assembly of Fig. 14;

Fig. 16 is a front elevational view of the male member of the buckle of Fig. 10 with the lockout assembly in one position and the prongs of the male member shown in dashed lines in their

locked condition;

Fig. 17 is a longitudinal sectional view of the male member of the first alternate embodiment of Fig. 16 taken along line A-A of Fig. 16;

Fig. 18 is a front elevational view of the female member of a second alternate embodiment of this invention;

Fig. 19 is a longitudinal sectional view of the female member of the second alternate embodiment taken along line A-A of Fig. 18;

Fig. 20 is an exploded perspective view of the lockout assembly of this second alternate embodiment of this invention;

Fig. 21 is a front elevational view of the second alternate embodiment of this invention shown in assembled lock condition with fragmentary belts shown attached to the male and female members of the buckle;

Fig. 22 is exploded view of the buckle of the second alternate embodiment with the female member shown in a longitudinal section along line A-A of Fig. 21 with the lockout assembly shown both attached to female member and duplicated above the female member and the male member in side elevational view;

Fig. 23 is a front elevational view of the male member of the second alternate embodiment of this invention with the prongs shown in dashed lines to represent their locked condition;

Fig. 24 is a top plan view of the lockout mechanism of the embodiment of Figs. 20-23;

Fig. 25 is a side elevational view of the lockout mechanism of Figs. 20-24;

Fig. 26 is a side elevational view of the lockout mechanism of Figs. 20-25;

Fig. 27 is a top plan view of the lockout mechanism of Figs. 20- 26;

Fig. 28 is a front elevational view of the female member of a third alternate embodiment of this invention;

Fig. 29 is a longitudinal sectional view of the female member of this third alternate embodiment of Fig. 28 taken along lines C-C of Fig. 28;

Fig. 30 is a side elevational view of the female member of Fig. 28;

Fig. 31 is a front elevational view of an assembled third alternate embodiment;

Fig. 32 is a longitudinal sectional view of the buckle of Fig. 31 in a locked condition with this section taken along lines A-A of Fig. 31;

Fig. 33 is a fragmentary perspective view of the buckle of Fig. 31 in the step of being released by finger pressure on the female part button in the direction of the arrow in Fig. 33;

The 34 is an exploded view of the male member of the third alternate embodiment of Fig. 31 showing the unlocked condition with prongs depressed in solid lines and in dashed lines in their locked condition and with the unrestrained male member shown to the right;

Fig. 35 is a longitudinal sectional view of the buckle assembly of Fig. 34 taken along lines B-B of Fig. 34; and

Fig. 36 is a longitudinal sectional view of the male member of Fig. 34.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring now to Fig. 1 through Fig. 6 of the drawing, a buckle generally designated 10 comprises a partially hollow female member 11 and a male member 12 in assembled condition with respective belt loops 13 and 14 defined by cross bars 15 and 16 respectively. The female and male parts 11 and 12 are shown locked with the female part having recesses 21 and 23 in the upper and lower edges, respectively and the male part 12 with upper and lower flexible prongs 20 and 22 which extend through the openings defined by recesses 21 and 23 of the female member 11, and in locking engagement with catches 40 and 42.

As may be seen in Figs. 1 and 2, the female member 11 has a generally rectangular recess for receiving the male member 12. The male member 12 has a three-part extension including the two prongs 20 and 22 and a resilient cantilevered tongue 26 carrying a release button 30 and integral stop members 32 and 34. The release button 30 extends through the front of the female member through an opening 31. Note that the prongs 20 and 22 each include a respective boss 36 and 38 of which engage the stops 32 and 34 integral with the release button 30 and the cantilevered tongue 26, of the male part 12.

Note in Fig. 2 that the button 30 is preferably sloped on its upper face and is not in locking engagement with the female part and does not include any mating catch.

In accordance with this invention, whenever the buckle is engaged, the male member 12,

including prongs 20 and 22 is inserted into the receptacle R of female member 11 until catches 40 and 42 snap over the mating recess edges of female member 11. At the same time tongue 26 is depressed downwardly or behind the front face of member 11 until it reaches opening 31, when button 30 snaps into opening 31. When catches 40 and 42 are thus engaged the stops 32 and 34 engage bosses 36 and 38 on the male member and the prongs 20 and 22 cannot be depressed to release the buckle until the button 30 is depressed. The depression must be sufficient to move the button 30 and its stops 32 and 34 away from the integral 36 and 38. This will allow the prongs 20 and 22 to move inwardly into the buckle, namely, downward in Fig. 1 for prong 20 and upward in the same figure for prong 22 thereby releasing catches 40 and 42.

This action can easily be accomplished by grasping prongs 20 and 22 with the right hand thumb and a finger and simultaneously applying pressure with the fore finger to depress button 30. The same, of course, can be accomplished using the left-hand. The button 30 and its stops 32-34 cooperate to positively lock prongs 20 and 22 against inward depression. Ribs 33 and 35 protect the button 30.

Please refer now specifically to Figs. 3 and 4, which show a slightly modified form of buckle. The button 30 is depressed and prongs 20 and 22 shown in dashed lines are squeezed to release the catches 40 and 42. This can be accomplished only when the stops 32 and 34 have moved below the level of the bosses 36 and 38. Deflection of the bosses 32-34 is possible due to the resilience of the tongue 26. As soon as finger pressure is released from the button 30 and the prongs 20 and 22 have moved out of the way, the button 30 and its stops 32 and 34 again resume a locking position in contact or immediately adjacent to the bosses 36 and 38 as shown in Fig. 5.

Fig. 6 is a cross sectional view taken along line 6-6 of Fig. 5 and shows the configuration of the male buckle member 12 as separated from female member 11.

In the normal and restrained position of the tongue 26 and prongs 20 and 22 as shown in Fig. 1 and 3, there is little likelihood of the prongs 20 & 22 of the male member 12 catching and being distorted and possibly broken. Therefore the feature of this invention which provides locking of the buckle when engaged, also provides an additional second function of protecting the male member from damage the male member.

THE FIRST ALTERNATE EMBODIMENT

Although the use of the button 30 of the first embodiment is a desirable and preferred embodiment of this invention, it is recognized that another means for locking the male member's prongs from inadvertent release in this type of buckle, is possible. Such an arrangement, including a sliding lock, may also be employed. Such an embodiment is disclosed in Figs. 7 through 17.

Now referring to Figs. 7 through 9, the alternate form of female member 51 may be seen with a belt loop 53 defined by a cross bar 55. The female member includes a generally rectangular recess R, best seen in Fig. 8 and a pair of edge openings 57 and 59, similar to recesses 21 and 23 of the embodiment of Figs. 1-6 for engaging prongs of the male part which is illustrated in Figs.

10 and 11.

The female part 51 includes a pair of longitudinally extending ribs 63 and 65, one on each side of an elongated opening O in the front face of the female part 51 and communicating with the internal recess R. Immediately adjacent to the sides of the opening O are a pair of detent members 67 and 69 which are used to provide an indication of transition from locked to unlocked position and to prevent unintended unlocking of the locking device of this embodiment. This feature is best understood in connection with the explanation, below of Fig. 10.

The locking member of this embodiment, namely the lockout assembly 70 is best seen in Fig. 9. This assembly 70 includes a top member including a transverse extending bar 75 for finger operation and also includes an elongated boss 83, shown in phantom in Fig. 9. The lockout top 71 rests over the front face of the female part 51 and is secured to the lockout bottom 72 which is a generally T shaped member located within the recess R of Fig. 7. The lockout parts top 71 and bottom 72 are secured together by a fastener such as screw 85 with the elongated boss 83 resting in a U shaped groove 81 in the lockout bottom 72. The lockout assembly is able to move longitudinally with respect to the female part 51 by finger pressure on the cross bar 55.

Key to the operation of this embodiment is the fact that the lockout bottom member 72 includes a pair of lobes 77 and 79 which extend laterally with respect to the direction of movement of the lockout assembly 70. The lobes 77 and 79 therefore move from a prong locking position to secure the male buckle member 52 of Fig. 10 to the female member 51 in one position and to a prong unlocking position to allow the prongs of the male member 52 to be released. This is best

understood in connection with Figs. 10 and 11. Also characteristic of the lockout assembly 70 is the fact that the leg of the T shaped bottom member 72 includes an elongated generally rectangular recess 72R which receives a tongue 66 of the male member 50 of Fig. 16, similar to the tongue 26 of the first embodiment. The tongue 66 and the bottom lockout member 72 insure linear engagement of the male and female parts 50 and 51 during the buckling operation.

Now referring to Figs. 10 through 17, the full buckle 50, 51 is shown in locked condition with a belt segment B secured in the normal manner to the male part 52 by encircling its cross bar. Prongs 58 and 60 are visible extending out of respective recesses 57 and 59. The lobes 77 and 79 of the lockout assembly 70, best seen in Fig. 10 engage bosses 54 and 56, respectively of the prongs 58 and 60. In this condition, the prongs 58 and 60 may not be depressed since each bear against opposite sides of a rigid member, namely, the lobes 77 and 79 of the T shaped lower lockout member 72. This section of the lower lockout member 72 is rigid and reinforced by the tongue 66 as may be seen in Fig. 11 in phantom and in fig. 16 which shows the male part 50 in its relationship to the lockout assembly 70.

Suffice it to say, particularly by reference to Figs. 10 and 16, the lockout assembly 70 is operative to allow the prongs 58 and 60 to be depressed when in the most forward position as is shown in Fig. 16 and effectively prevents the compression of the prongs 58 and 60 and release of their integral catch when the lockout assembly is in the retracted position as shown in Fig. 10. The presence of the ribs 63 and 65 of Fig. 7 protect the lockout assembly 70 from most contact which might cause its movement from locked to unlocked position. The ribs 63 and 65 also act to direct the user's finger in the line of locking or unlocking movements. This aids the user since

only tactile reference is needed to operate the lockout assembly 70. The detents 67 and 69 of Fig. 7 provide a tactile indication of movement to an unlocked or locked position. When moved to an unlocked position, the release of the buckle 50 still requires simultaneous or near simultaneous compression of the prongs 58 and 60. A simple forward sliding motion of the hand allows release of the lockout assembly 70 by the forefinger and compression of the prongs 58 and 60 by the thumb and a finger for quick release of the buckle in one natural motion.

SECOND ALTERNATE EMBODIMENT

In further refinement of this invention, I determined that another positive locking arrangement can be achieved by using a rotary locking assembly which also serves to prevent the depression of the prongs of an edge-squeeze to release type of buckle. Such an embodiment is illustrated in Figs. 18 through 27.

Now referring to Figs. 18 through 23, which show the female member 101 in Fig. 18, the latched buckle, generally designated 100, in Fig. 21 and the male member 102 in Figs. 22 and 23. The female member 101 includes a belt loop defined by a cross bar 103, a pair of edge recesses 105 and 107 and a generally rectangular recess 101R. Female member 101 likewise includes a pair of ribs 109 and 111 and a circular opening 113 of Figs. 18 and 22. The opening 113 receives a rotary lockout assembly, generally designated 115 of Fig. 20.

The rotary lockout assembly 115 includes a top lockout member 116 with an integral crossbar 117 which is used to rotate the lockout assembly 115 from a locked to an unlocked position by

the user. The top lockout member 116 includes a disc portion 119 resting on top of the front face of the female member 101 between the ribs 109 and 111. A spline 121 extends from the lower face of the disc portion 119 through the circular opening 113 in female port 101 and engages a lower or bottom rotary lockout member 123 carrying a pair of lobes 125 and 127. These lobes 125 and 127 are dimensioned so that they will bear against the prongs 104 and 106 of the male member 102 when in a locked orientation and when the rotary lockout member 115 is rotated away from the locked orientation, allow the prongs 104 and 105 of the male member 102 to be pressed inwardly and unlatch. Fig. 21 shows the latched and locked buckle 100. A 90 degree rotation in either direction places the buckle 100 in an unlocked condition ready for unlatching by pressure on the prongs 104 and 106 of the male member 102. It is also clear that less than 90 degrees rotation will allow the buckle to be released by pinching the prongs 104 and 106 simultaneously and drawing the male and female parts 102 and 101 apart.

The rotary lockout assembly 115 can be located on either the male part 102 or on the female part 101. If located on the male part 102 as shown in Fig. 23, the opening 113 of the female part is a slot rather than a round opening. If located on the female part 101, the round opening is used and the male part of Fig. 23 only includes its tongue 108 and lacks the rotary lockout assembly 123. In either case, the rotary lockout assembly 123 prevents the release of the buckle by blocking the inward depression of the prongs 104 and 106 in one orientation and allows their release when the rotary lockout assembly is at any orientation other than with the lobes 125 and 127 engaging or interfering with the depression of prongs 104 and 106.

This embodiment provides protection from any force on the front of the buckle 100 causing the

release of the rotary lockout assembly. An intended rotary movement, usually requiring a thumb and a finger to rotate the assembly 123 is necessary.

THIRD ALTERNATE EMBODIMENT

During the development of this invention, it appeared that it is also possible to make a locking buckle employing a button release on the female member, utilizing a cantilevered tongue carrying the release button to engage and release the prongs rather than through the presence of lobes. The release button can be molded integrally with the female part. This embodiment is illustrated in Figs. 28 through 36. Fundamental to this embodiment is the fact that the cantilevered carrier of the button engages the prongs of the male part whenever the button is not depressed.

Refer now to Figs. 28 through 36 with particular reference to Fig. 28 showing the female part 151, Fig. 31 showing the latched and locked buckle 150, Fig. 33 showing the process of releasing a prong and Fig. 34 showing the male member 152.

The female member 151 presents the same general appearance as the previously disclosed female members except that the release button 153 remains a part of the female member 151 at all times and, in fact is integrally molded into the female part. The male part 152 of Fig. 34 includes a pair of prongs 154 and 156 and a central forked tongue 158. The tongue 158 aligns the male and female buckle parts 152 and 151 and the forked extensions 160 and 162 of the male part 152 embrace the release button 153 within the female part 151 whenever the buckle 150 is engaged.

The release button 153 is located on cantilevered release button carrier 155 of the female part 151. The female part 151 as seen in end view Figs. 30 and 33 includes side walls 157 and 159 which engage the prongs 154 and 156 respectively in a similar manner as the bosses 32 and 34 of the male member 11 of Figs. 1-7. In this embodiment the release button carrier 155 and the release button 153 remain protected within the female member 151 whether the buckle 150 is latched or unlatched.

For an understanding of the operation of this third alternate embodiment, reference is now made to Fig. 33 which shows a prong 154 in its buckle releasing position as the release button 153 and its carrier 155 have moved downward under finger pressure in the direction of the arrow so that the boss 154B has cleared the side wall 159 of the cantilevered carrier 155. As the buckle separates, the prongs 154 and 156 are removed, and the finger or thumb pressure on the button is released, the plastic memory of the cantilevered carrier 155 returns it to its normal position within the female part 151. To facilitate reengagement, the walls 157 and 159 may be tapered to allow the prongs 154 and 156 to resume their normal locking position shown in Fig. 33 by the dashed line.

SUMMARY

In each of these embodiments, the buckle parts are preferably fabricated by molding out of such a material as nylon or Delrin of the Dupont Engineering Polymers of Wilmington, Delaware. In each case, the buckle employs two catches on opposite edges of the buckle which are releasable by inwardly applied manual pressure. The embodiments also include an auxiliary stop or lobe which engages each of these catches to prevent them from releasing unless the auxiliary stop or lobe is moved aside to allow the catches to move in a releasing direction. The auxiliary stop or lobes are controlled by a resiliently mounted release button, as in the preferred and third alternative embodiments or by a sliding or rotating locking device, as in the first and second alternative embodiments, respectively. Each of these variants upon this invention are effective to add a greater degree of security to buckles for a variety of uses.

The foregoing embodiments are merely representative of the principles of this invention and are not to be considered as limiting. It is apparent that one, given the teaching present could produce buckles which incorporate the principles of this invention while still having some difference. Therefore the scope of this invention is not to be considered limited to the embodiments shown but, instead, are defined by the following claims including the scope afforded by the Doctrine of Equivalents.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A buckle including an auxiliary locking feature comprising:
 - a female buckle part including belt or strap receiving portion, and a body portion defining a recess for receiving a mating portion of a male buckle part;
 - a male buckle part including a belt or strap receiving portion and a female buckle engaging part;
 - the body portion of said female buckle part including a pair of edge recesses;
 - the male buckle engaging part of said female buckle part including a pair of flexible prongs for insertion into the recess of said female part and for engaging said female part to secure the buckle parts together;
 - said prongs being accessible through said edge recesses for manually releasing said prongs to allow said male and female buckles to separate; and
 - manually controlled means engaging the prongs of said male buckle part for selectively preventing the flexing of said prongs and release of said buckle parts.
2. A buckle in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said manually controlled means comprises a manually operated button and includes resilient means carrying said button; and
 - wherein said means which normally engage said prongs releases said prongs upon operation of said button.
3. A buckle in accordance with Claim 2 wherein said female buckle part includes a front

wall having an aperture therein and said button is accessible through said aperture.

4. A buckle in accordance with Claim 2 wherein said resilient means is a cantilevered member formed integrally with a buckle part and is located within the recess of said female part when said buckle is engaged.

5. A buckle in accordance with Claim 4 wherein said cantilevered member is formed integrally with said male buckle part.

6. A buckle in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said female buckle part has a generally planar front surface including at least one portion extending above the planar front surface in the region of said manually controlled means to protect said manually controlled means from unintentional operation.

7. A buckle in accordance with Claim 6 wherein said manually controlled means comprises a button exposed on said generally planar surface and said protecting means comprises a pair of ribs.

8. A buckle in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said male buckle part includes a cantilevered tongue located between said prongs and carrying said manually controlled means.

9. A buckle in accordance with Claim 8 wherein said manually controlled means is a button carried by said cantilevered tongue and operational to deflect said tongue away from said

prongs to allow said prongs to flex and to release the buckle parts.

10. A buckle in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said manually controlled means comprises a member mounted for movement with respect to said prongs to move from a first prong locking position to a second prong unlocking position in response to manual action of the user.

11. A buckle in accordance with Claim 10 wherein said movable mounted member comprises a button depressible to move said member out of engagement with said prongs.

12. A buckle in accordance with Claim 10 wherein said movable mounted member is slidable with respect to said prongs.

13. A buckle in accordance with Claim 10 wherein said movable mounted member is rotatable with respect to said prongs.

14. A plastic buckle comprising;

a female part including a belt attachment loop at one edge and a male part receiving opening at the opposite end from said belt attachment loop;

said female part having a front face, a rear face and a pair of edges;

said female part defining a pair of recesses one in each of said edges communicating with said male part receiving opening;

a male part including a belt attachment loop at one edge and a pair of prongs at the opposite edge dimensioned to enter said male part receiving opening in said female part and for

engaging said recesses to secure said male and female parts together and to flex under finger pressure to release said male and female parts;

said buckle further including means normally engaging said prongs when said prongs are positioned to secure said male and female parts together and for preventing the prongs from releasing said male and female parts; said buckle further including manually operable means for disengaging said prong release preventing means.

15. A plastic buckle comprising:

a female part including a belt attachment loop, an opening at the opposite end from said belt attachment loop, a front face, a rear face and a pair of edges, each of said edges including a recess communicating with said opening:

a male part including a belt attachment loop and a pair of prongs dimensioned to enter the opening of said female part, each of said pair of prongs including a catch engaging one of said recesses to secure said male and female parts together and said prongs being adapted to flex under finger pressure to disengage said catch from said recesses to release said male and female parts;

said buckle further including a member normally engaging said prongs when said prongs are positioned to secure the male and female parts together to prevent said prongs from releasing said male and female parts; and

manually operable means for disengaging said prong engaging member from said prongs.

16. A buckle in accordance with claim 15 wherein said manually operable means includes a button and resilient means carrying said button and said member.

17. A buckle in accordance with claim 15 wherein the front face of said buckle includes an aperture therein and said button is normally positioned in said aperture.

18. A buckle in accordance with claim 15 wherein said male part includes a cantilevered tongue located between said prongs and carrying said manually operable means.

FIG. 1

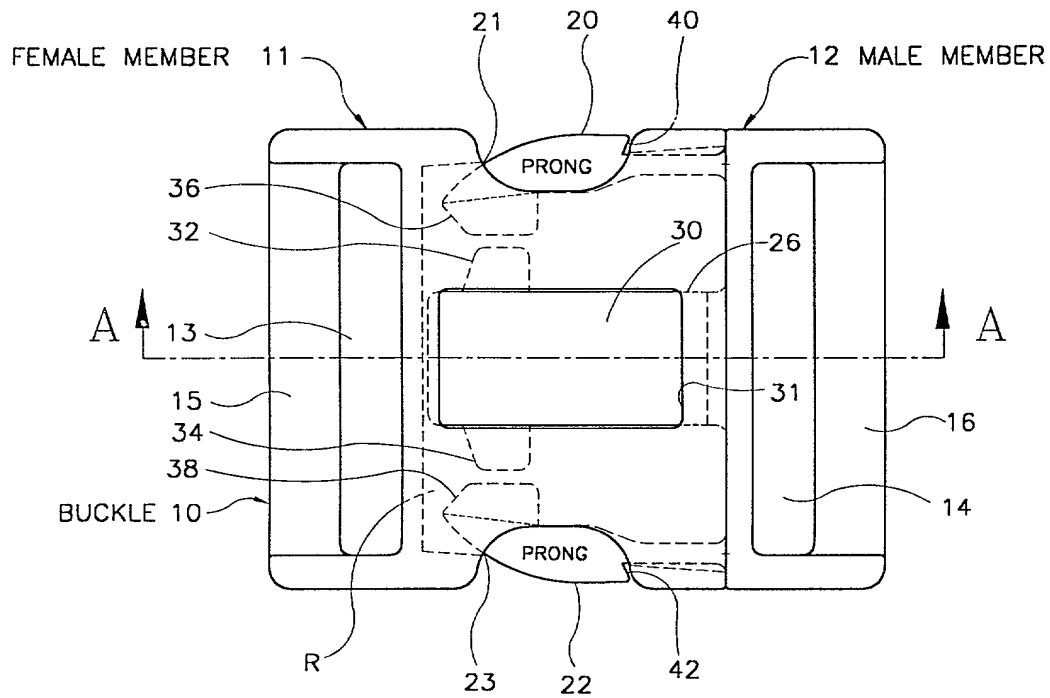
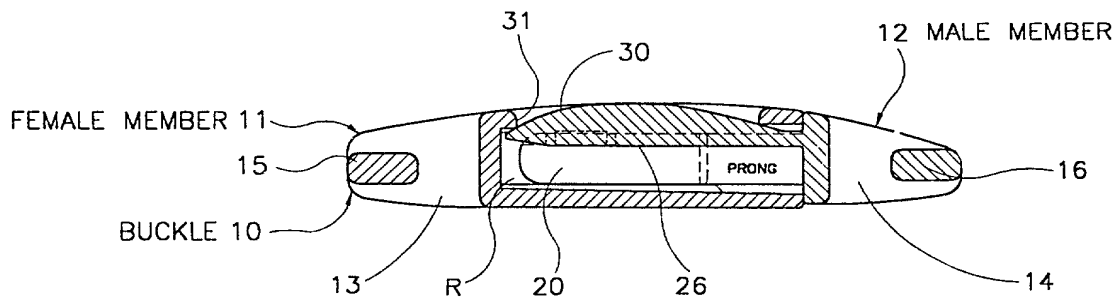


FIG. 2



Section A-A
BUCKLE ASSY SHOWN LOCKED

FIG. 3

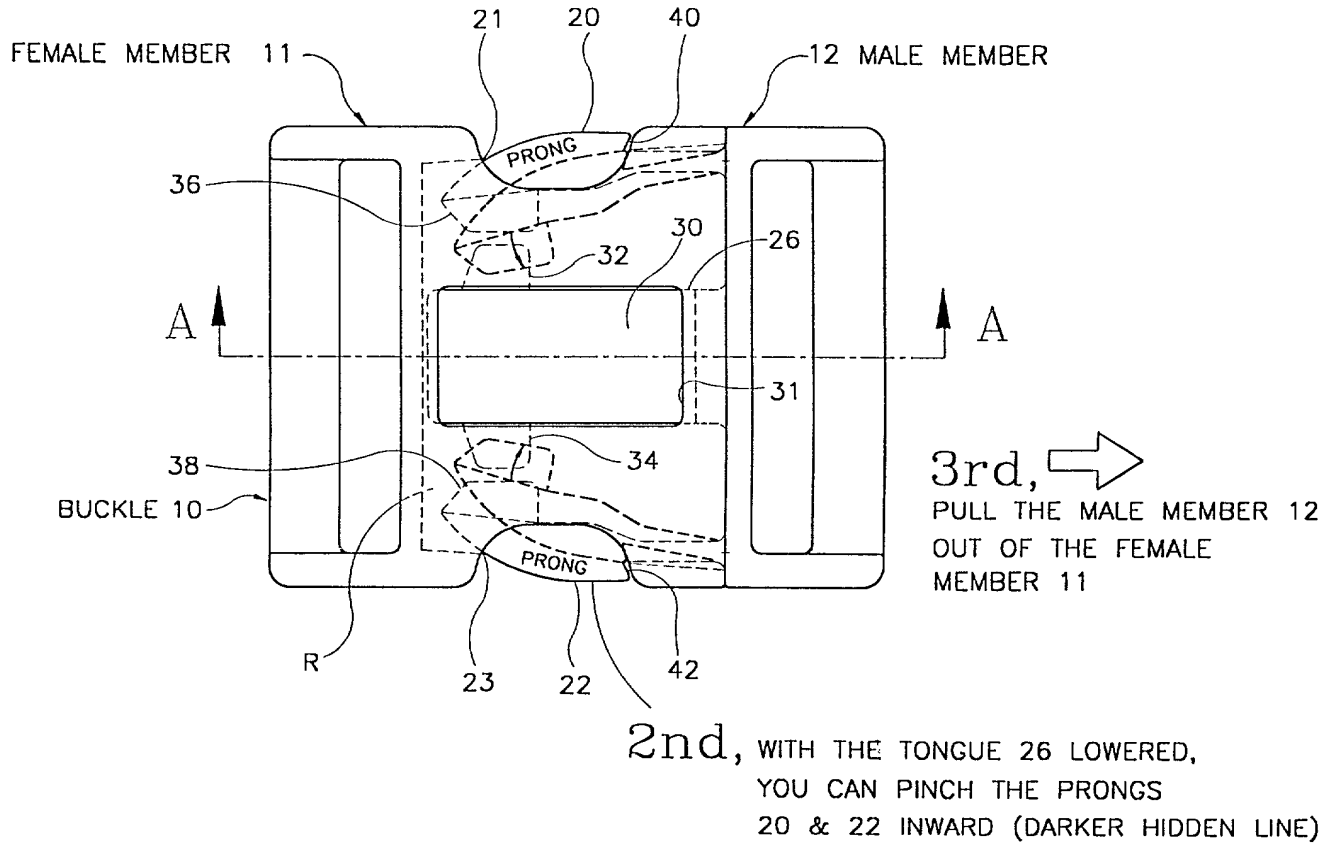
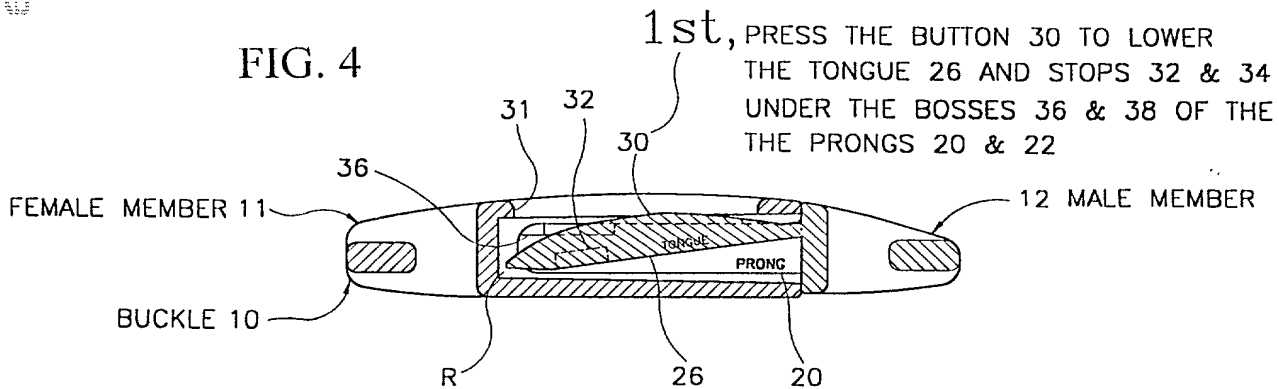


FIG. 4



Section A-A

BUCKLE ASSY BEING RELEASED

FIG. 5

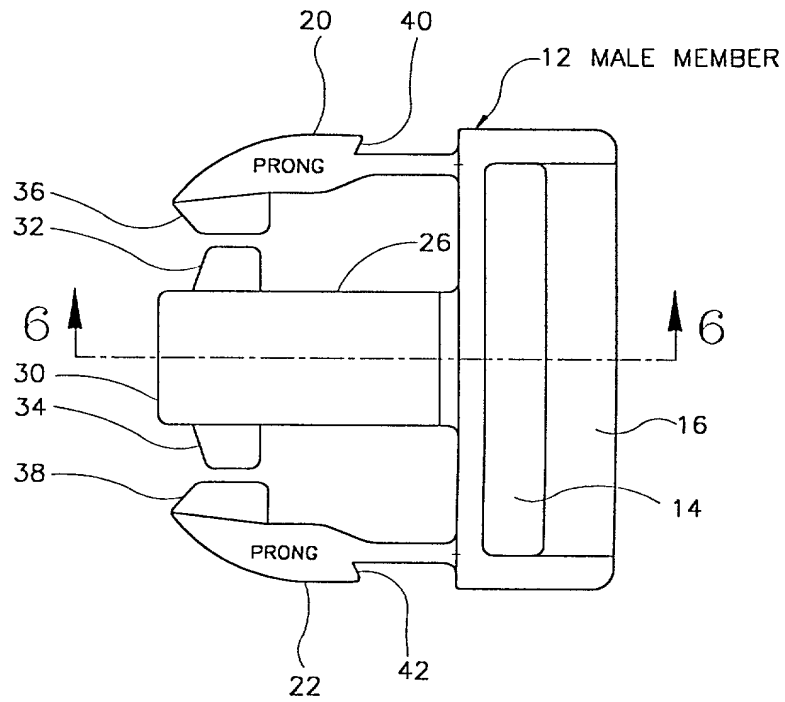
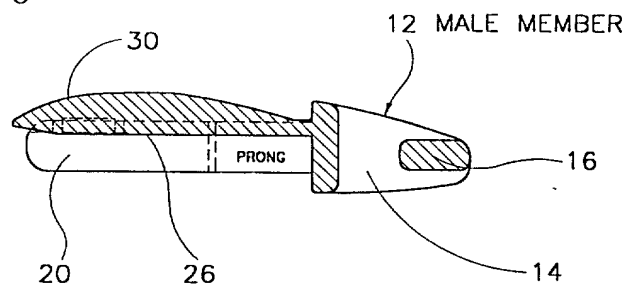


FIG. 6



Section 6-6

MALE BUCKLE

RELAXED CONDITION

FIG. 7

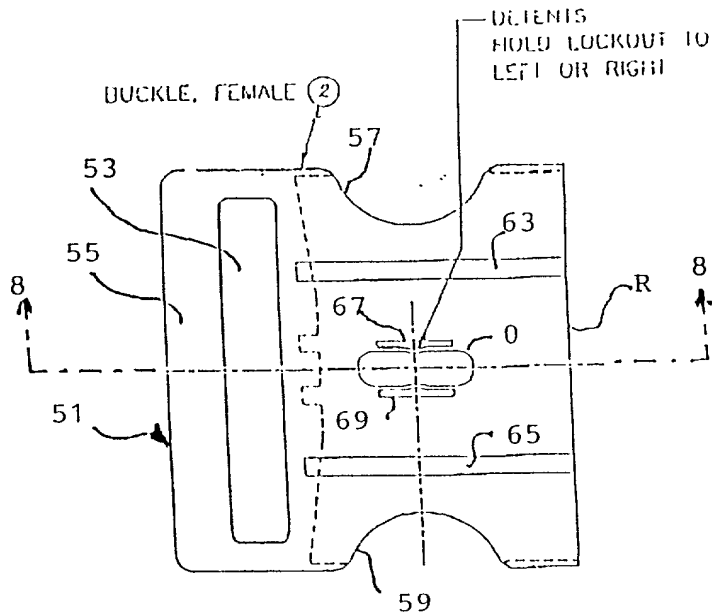


FIG. 8

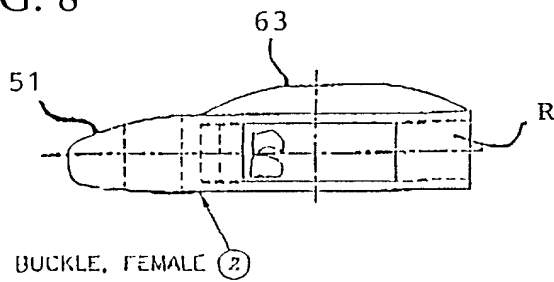


FIG. 9

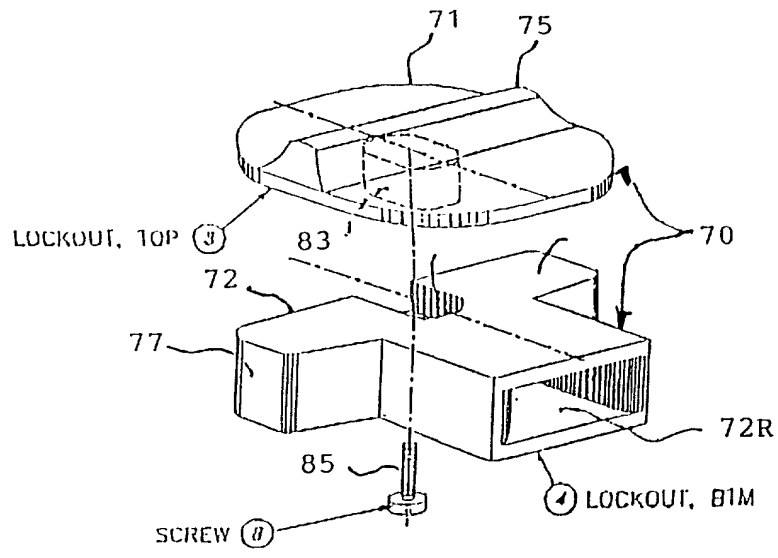
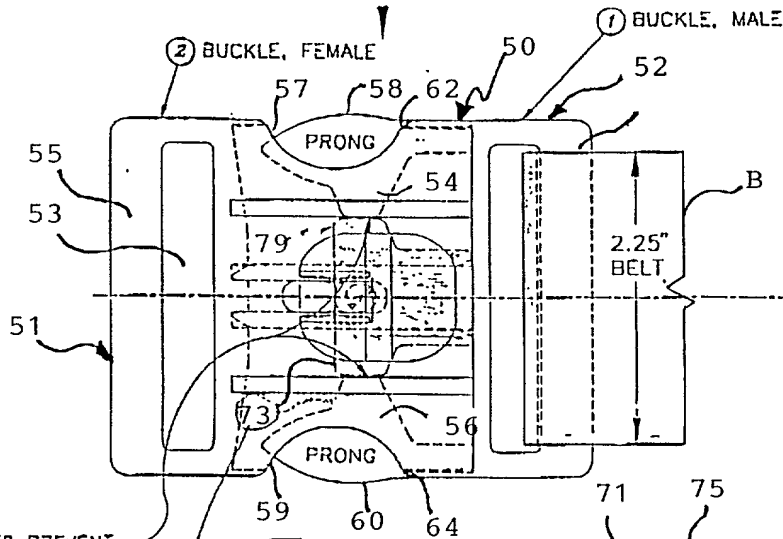


FIG. 10

BUCKLE ASSY
SHOWN LOCKED



THESE LOBES PREVENT
THE PRONGS FROM
TRAVELING INWARD

FIG. 11

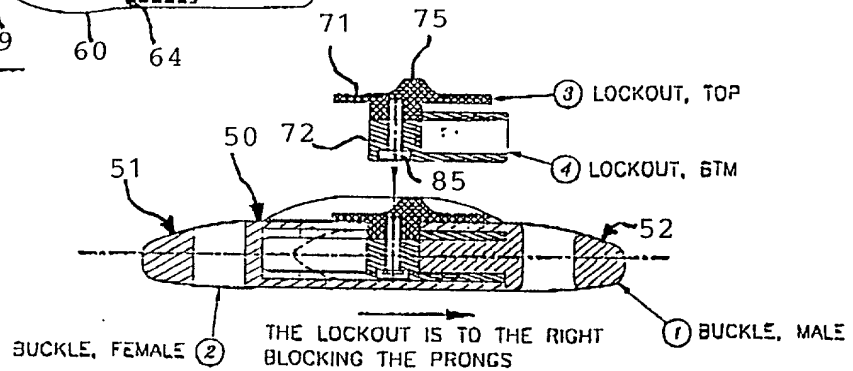


FIG. 12

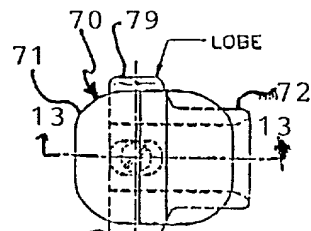


FIG. 13

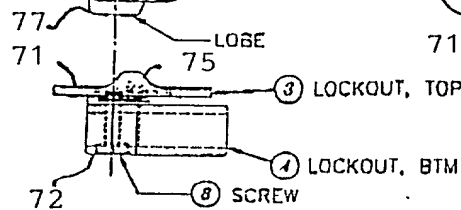


FIG. 14

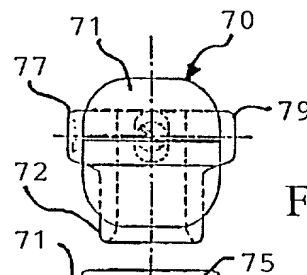


FIG. 15

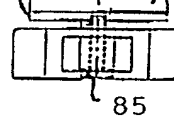


FIG. 16

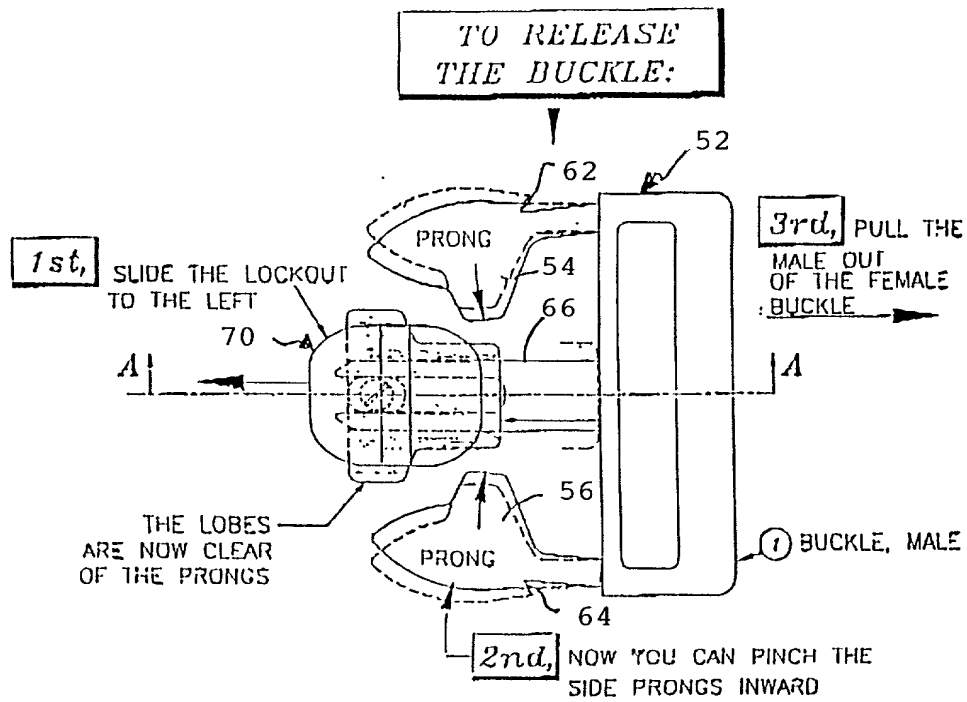
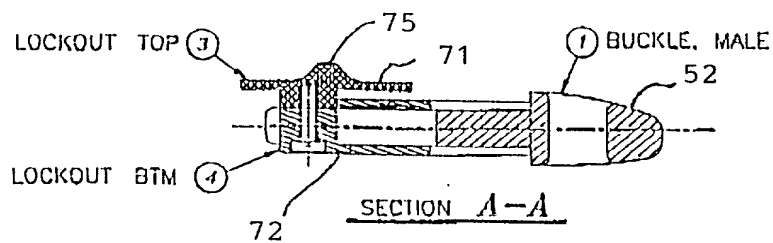


FIG. 17



TYPE OF ACTION
LINEAR SLIDE LOCKOUT IN THE
FEMALE BUCKLE

FIG. 18

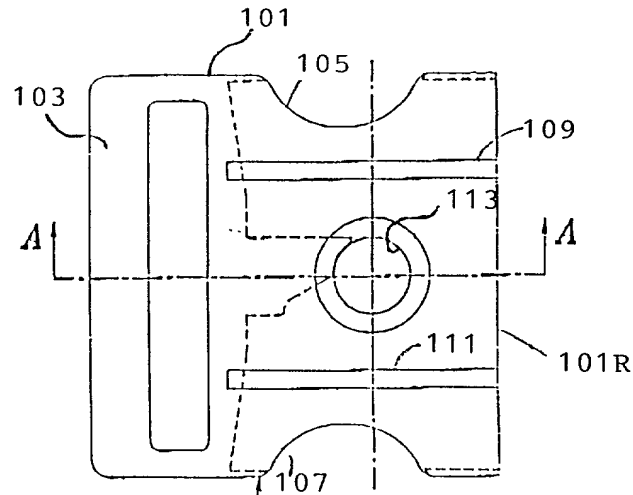


FIG. 19

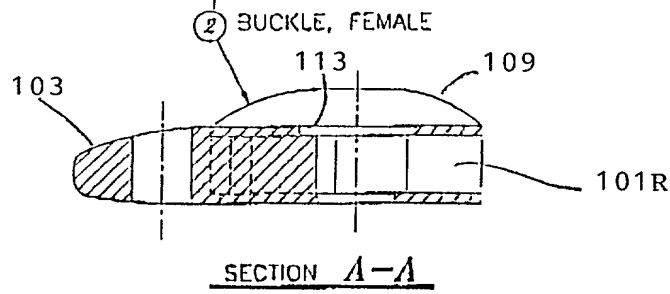


FIG. 20

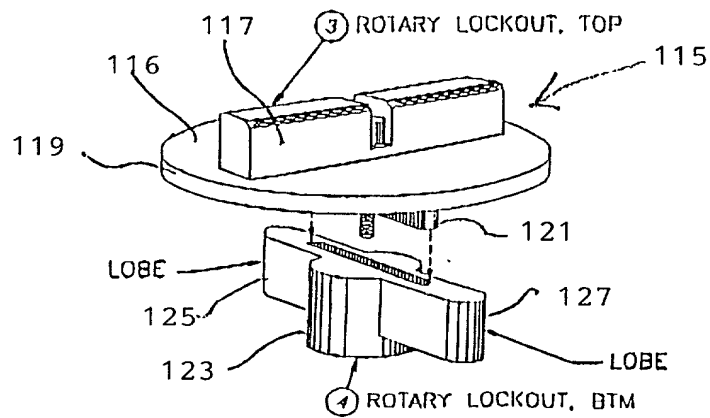


FIG. 21

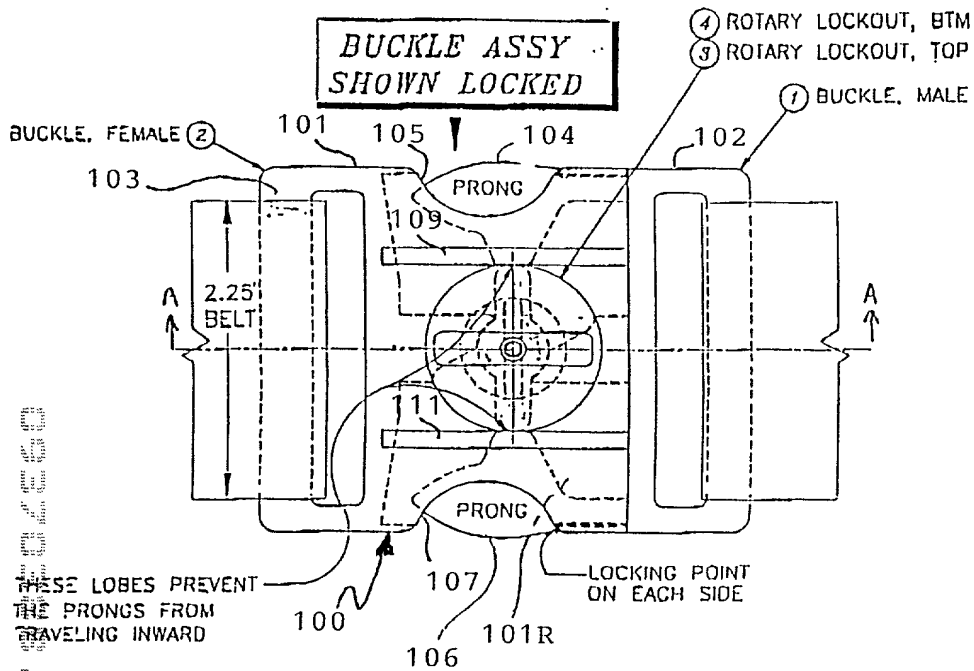


FIG. 22

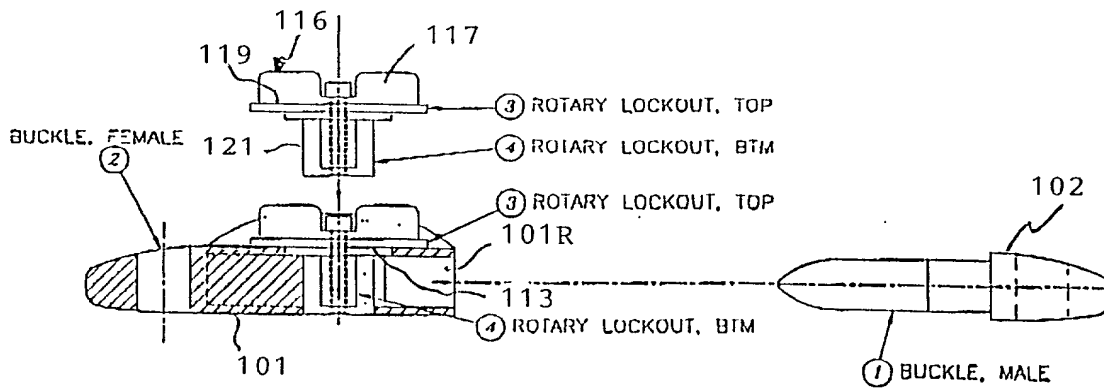


FIG. 23

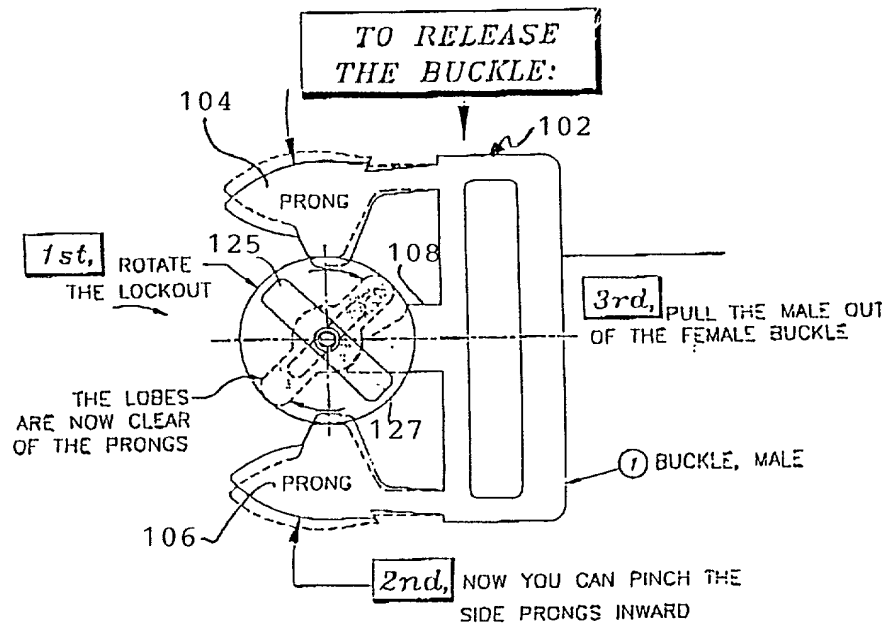


FIG. 24

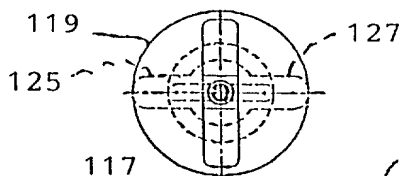


FIG. 25

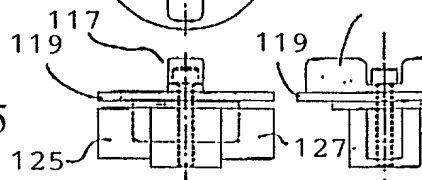


FIG. 27

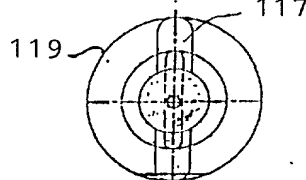


FIG. 26

TYPE OF ACTION
ROTARY LOCKOUT IN THE
FEMALE BUCKLE

FIG. 28

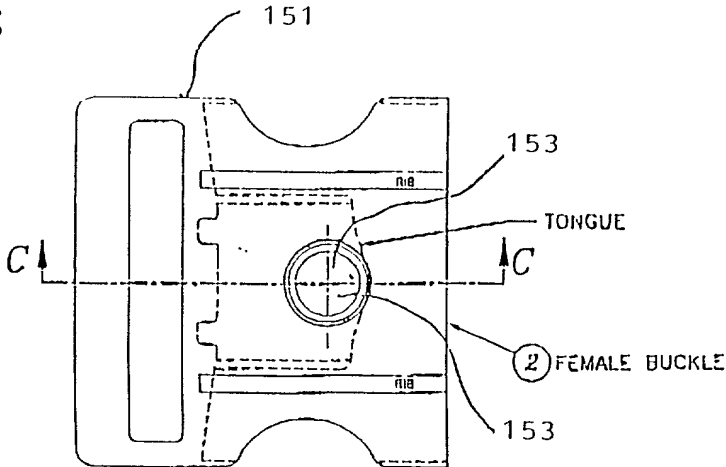


FIG. 29

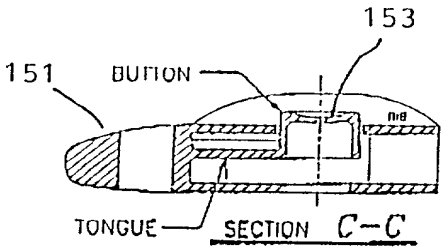


FIG. 30

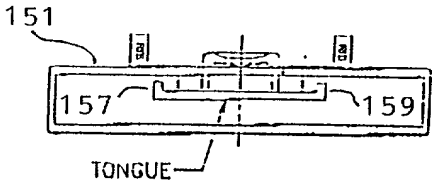


FIG. 31

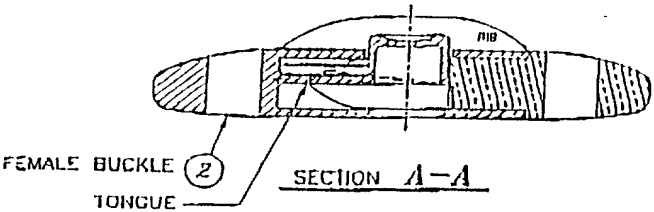
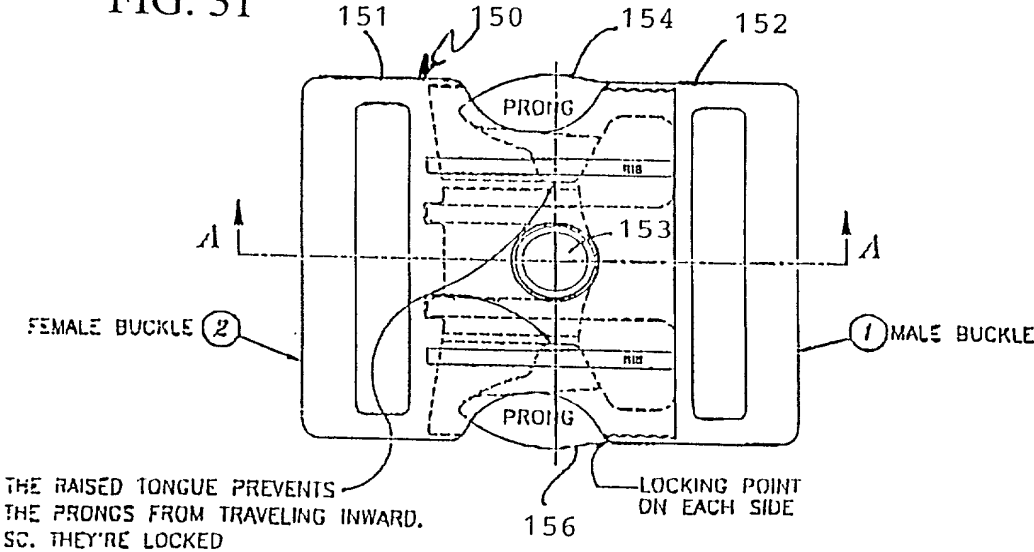


FIG. 32

BUCKLE ASSY
SHOWN LOCKED

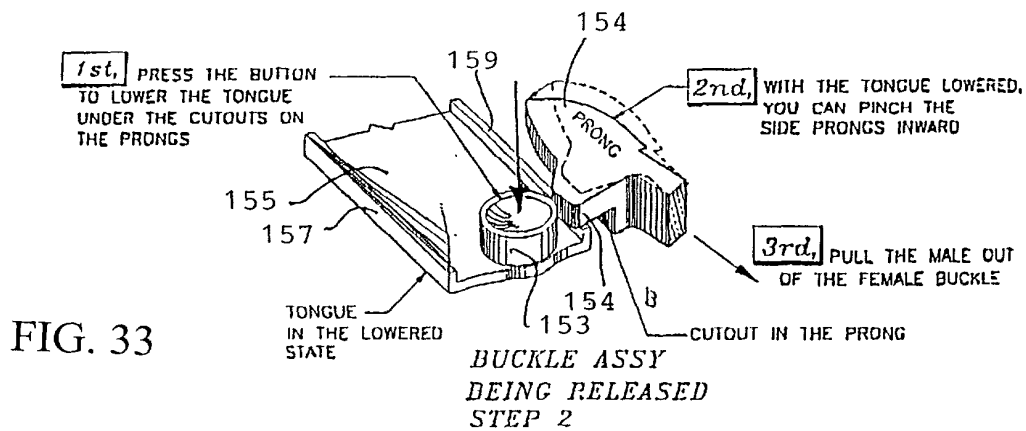


FIG. 33

FIG. 34

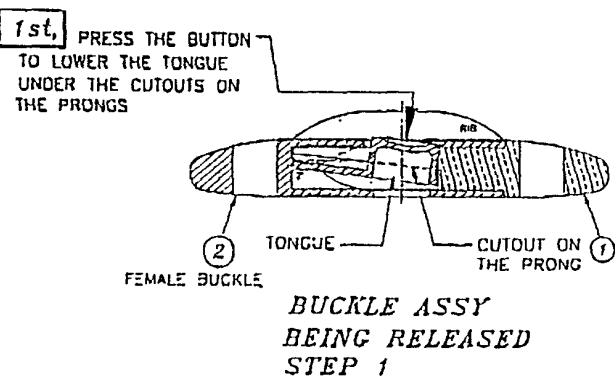
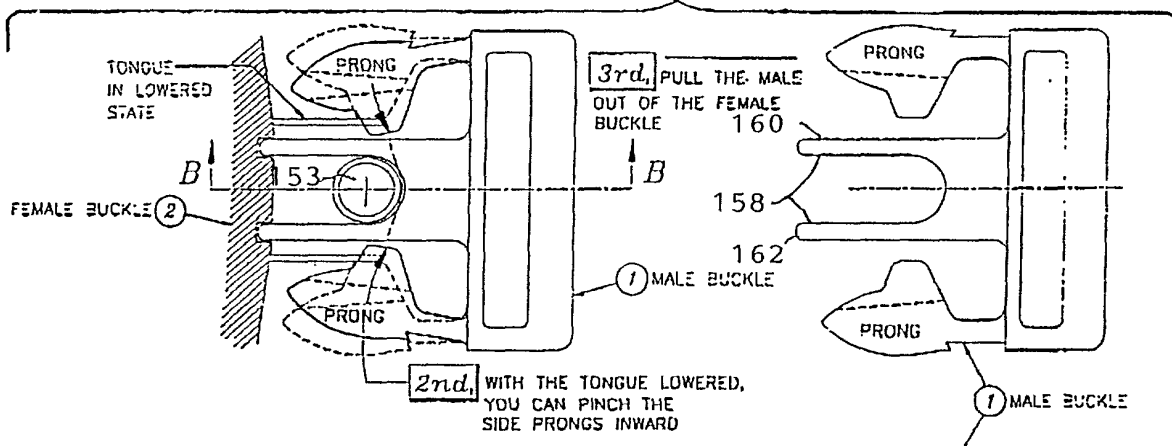


FIG. 35

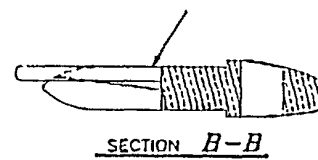


FIG. 36

TYPE OF ACTION
VERTICAL ACTION; BUTTON ON
THE FEMALE SIDE

Docket No.

01-0941-556

Declaration and Power of Attorney For Patent Application

English Language Declaration

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name,

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

IMPROVED BUCKLES WITH OVERRIDING LOCK

the specification of which

(check one)

☒ is attached hereto.

☐ was filed on _____ as United States Application No. or PCT International Application Number _____ and was amended on _____ (if applicable)

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose to the United States Patent and Trademark Office all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, Section 119(a)-(d) or Section 365(b) of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate, or Section 365(a) of any PCT International application which designated at least one country other than the United States, listed below and have also identified below, by checking the box, any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate or PCT International application having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed.

Prior Foreign Application(s)

Priority Not Claimed

(Number)

(Country)

(Day/Month/Year Filed)

☐

(Number)

(Country)

(Day/Month/Year Filed)

☐

(Number)

(Country)

(Day/Month/Year Filed)

☐

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U.S.C. Section 119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below:

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U. S. C. Section 120 of any United States application(s), or Section 365(c) of any PCT International application designating the United States, listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States or PCT International application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. Section 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose to the United States Patent and Trademark Office all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, C. F. R., Section 1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT International filing date of this application:

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Status)
(patented, pending, abandoned)

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Status)
(patented, pending, abandoned)

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Status)
(patented, pending, abandoned)

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

POWER OF ATTORNEY: As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) and/or agent(s) to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith. *(list name and registration number)*

John E. Wagner; Reg. No. 17496

Robert C. Smith; Reg. No. 17500

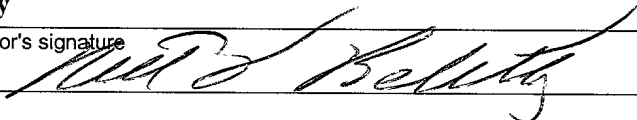
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LAW OFFICES OF JOHN E. WAGNER
3541 Ocean View Blvd.
Glendale, CA 91208

Direct Telephone Calls to: *(name and telephone number)*
John E. Wagner (818) 957-3340

Full name of sole or first inventor

Robert Beletsky

Sole or first inventor's signature



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Second inventor's signature

Date

Residence

Citizenship

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